

Strumwasser continued . . .

through the painting and sculpture of their time. You discover what they were really like, what they thought, and how they lived. From a sociological point of view, art is an absolute reflection of society. It involves the person who commissions the work, the patron, the artist and the viewer. The fascination for me is also in the transformation of ideas from different geographical areas and chronological periods.

To be honest with you, I also just love to look at beautiful things. My first art history class excited me so much and my decision to study it further was more of an emotional response to the subject. Art history is a dynamic subject that has pushed me to do things that I never pictured myself doing. For example, I never liked getting up and presenting papers in classes and now I'm teaching classes and reading papers at conferences. Studying art has also motivated me to travel to Europe quite often, which is one of the most important aspects of my life. Traveling is certainly another way to study people and learn to understand them better. As it turns out, my sociology background has been a wonderful foundation for my career in art.

Q: In what area of art history do you specialize?

A: I specialize in renaissance and baroque art. I divide my courses into separate classes—northern and Italian. However, I particularly enjoy teaching the introductory courses because that is where the students get their first exposure to art history. The beginning classes give my students a good understanding of certain periods rather than just a little bit of knowledge about four or five centuries.

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Q: Do you find that your students' interest in art increases the more they are exposed to it?

A: I think it does. I try to push the gallery assignments and encourage them to visit the museums in California. I'm looking forward to sending my students to the new Fresno Metropolitan Museum in the spring of 1984 to view old master paintings. When they can go to a museum and recognize different artists and know something about what they are looking at, they come back really enthusiastic. It makes my job a lot easier.

Q: Are there many women teaching art history today?

A: Most of my students, especially my upper-division students, are women and most of the graduate students studying art history are women. But the majority of instructors are men.

Q: Why is that?

A: There are several reasons. Completing a graduate degree requires a lot of time and commitment, not to mention courage and fortitude. Perhaps women marry and get involved with raising families and do not have the emotional or practical support they need to finish their degree. In fact, while I was writing my dissertation, I would have loved to have someone at home cooking my dinner and cleaning for me! I would like to see more women pursuing not just jobs, but *careers* in exciting fields that have previously been denied them. They have the ability and the talent—it just takes determination to follow through.

Q: How would you describe yourself?

A: What I've started to realize is that I'm really a lot of different people. I have a side that is very aggressive and demanding and I have a side that is very tender and shy. Teaching has allowed me the flexibility to integrate all of these different sides into one whole person and that's been wonderful.